

# Dragonshards

## The Reach of Riedra, Part Two

By Keith Baker



### Riedra and Adar

Most citizens of Khorvaire know even less about Adar than they do about Riedra. Adar is only loosely a country, and it does not maintain embassies. Adaran communities exist in many of the major cities of Khorvaire, but the typical Brelish commoner can't tell a Riedran from an Adaran -- or potentially, an Adaran from a citizen of Thrane. The people of Khorvaire first came from Sarlona, and with the many different environments found across the continent there is no uniform appearance for Riedrans. Accent, dress, and mannerisms are the keys to identification, and without Knowledge (geography) or experience with the culture, a normal citizen of Khorvaire can't tell the difference between the people of the two nations.

This is exacerbated by the fact that the Adarans are just as insular as the people of Riedra. It may seem strange that they aren't calling for aid against the Dreaming Dark in all the courts of the world, but they believe that the fight with Dal Quor is their personal battle; this is discussed in more detail in [Races of Eberron](#).

If an Inspired ambassador is questioned about the ongoing siege of Adar, his answer is simple. The people of Adar are guerilla warriors who are fighting a war against Riedra. The Adarans have dangerous supernatural powers and have used them against Riedrans in the past. The "siege" is a defensive measure to ensure the stability of the nation. All of these things are perfectly true -- if severely slanted for the benefit of the Inspired -- so this will hold up against *zone of truth* or *detect thoughts*. The kalashtar are fighting the rulers of Riedra. If the kalashtar are successful in their goal, they will destroy the Inspired and thus the system of government of Riedra. The Inspired are (in their words) seeking to maintain order and preserve the traditions of their nation.

And if a kalashtar PC does breaks ranks and trumpet the existence of the Dreaming Dark to the world . . . who's going to believe him? The Riedrans are strange, but they have never taken any sort of aggressive action against Khorvaire. On the contrary, they're helping rebuild the shattered nation. They're friendly, charming, and generous. Why should a king take the word of some strange peasant mystic over that of a close political ally?

Of course, some people may be wiser than this. Initially, that's the role of the PCs -- to be willing to consider the possible threat, to act where a king might not. And if a PC becomes a legendary hero, perhaps the rulers of the land will take her words more seriously. That's what adventuring is all about!

### The Dreaming Dark

The average Riedran has never even heard of the Dreaming Dark and knows nothing of Dal Quor. Riedrans believe that their leaders are vessels for the enlightened spirits of the past -- that there is a cycle of life and reincarnation, and that the greatest and most noble spirits transcend the flesh and guide the Inspired.

For that matter, the Inspired -- that is to say, the leaders of Riedra and those who hold official posts, such as ambassadors -- generally have no direct ties to the Dreaming Dark. Their administrative duties are enough to keep them busy and serve the interests of Dal Quor in their own way. An agent of the Dreaming Dark can

demand help from an Inspired embassy, but more likely than not will do this telepathically or in Dal Quor. So the embassy itself cannot be directly linked to local Dreaming Dark activities, and the ambassador can't reveal anything if probed.

This level of subtlety does make the Dreaming Dark one of the more difficult villains to use. The Dreaming Dark use *mind seeds* and possessed humans. Their agents may be followers of the Emerald Claw or the Cults of the Dragon Below, who don't realize the true nature of their masters. The party could foil a dozen schemes before they find out that all twelve were part of a grand scheme organized by the Dreaming Dark. And even when the PCs have the big showdown with the Inspired mastermind and bring him down in a blaze of psionic power, that doesn't implicate Riedra as a whole, any more than fighting a human would implicate Khorvaire. It tells people that there *are* evil Inspired; but the ambassador can go under a *zone of truth* and say that the villain had no ties to his government and that he knew nothing of his plan. Compartmentalization is key!

While most Riedrans know nothing of the Dreaming Dark, Riedran agents who serve the darkness do exist. Just as the Inspired ambassadors keep their distance from the cabal, these human agents have no connection to the Riedran government or embassy. While these agents do not have the full powers of the Inspired, they can serve as willing hosts for quori possession (see page 296 of the *Eberron Campaign Setting*). Seeing as how they are human, this power can come as a surprise to unwary adventurers!

## Riedrans in the World

Anyone traveling through the docks of a large city could stumble across a Riedran community. Characters may end up dealing with Riedran merchants, or run afoul of a Riedran community militia seeking to defend their community from the criminals of Khorvaire. PCs may run into an Inspired ambassador giving a speech or a mediating a dispute. And if the heroes perform a particularly impressive task, they may be invited to a gala in their honor at a Riedran embassy!

Describing all the cultural differences between the people of Khorvaire and those of Riedra is a subject for a sourcebook. But here are a few points with which you can play:

- Riedrans speak their own language and must acquire Common as a bonus language or by spending skill points. Merchants must learn Common to perform their work, but a Karrn who walks into a Riedran watering hole may find that no one speaks his language.
- Work is everything to the typical Riedran. This is both a point of personal pride and a form of religious duty. Riedrans have little time for leisure pursuits or interest in such things. What little time they take from work is typically devoted to religion: group meditation, ritual storytelling, or community service.
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- Riedran priests are rarely spellcasters, though a few are telepaths or seers. The role of the priest is to provide spiritual guidance, to remove doubt, and to aid and inspire the people. If outsiders are causing trouble in the community, it falls to the priest to gather the people and confront the problem.
- Honesty and community are critical values. Riedrans will always band together to help one another, and

anyone starting a brawl in a Riedran community should be prepared to take on everyone on the street. And aside from agents of the Dreaming Dark, Riedrans are scrupulously honest.

- An average Riedran dresses in black, white, or brown clothing. While basic designs are simple, Riedrans often use embroidery as a form of meditation, weaving complex designs along the hems of clothing. The colors blue and red are reserved for the Inspired, and the robes of Inspired lords are covered with labyrinthine patterns of color.
- Riedran cuisine uses simple base materials, but flavor is enhanced by combinations of spices. Gluttony is frowned upon, but there is nothing wrong with enjoying good food after a long day's work. Riedrans typically drink fruit juice or hot spiced water.
- Finally, Riedran body language is somewhat different from that of Khorvaire. Riedrans are raised not to fidget, and they stand perfectly still when talking. It is considered a token of respect to meet the gaze of someone you are speaking to. Riedrans will never verbally interrupt a speaker, but they indicate intent with gaze -- looking down if they have a comment to make, or looking to the side if they disagree with the speaker or are not interested in what he has to say. The degree of motion is as expressive as tone of voice. Thus, Riedrans often maintain an outward appearance of calm -- while in fact, a sharp turn of the head can be the same as a yell.

These are just a few examples of Riedran customs, which further vary by province and individual; but hopefully, this provides you with something with which to work.

Riedrans are neither monsters nor slaves. Riedra is a foreign culture, and the mannerisms of a Riedran may seem strange to most inhabitants of the Five Nations. But the Riedrans and their Inspired lords are not feared in the Five Nations; if anything, they are being welcomed by a continent in need of assistance, and people find the beauty and exotic nature of the Inspired to be intriguing.

## Playing a Riedran

Riedra is an unusual choice for a region of origin. Most Riedrans consider their homeland to be a paradise, a peaceful realm free of crime and doubt. The people of Khorvaire are misguided and chaotic, prone to violence and undisciplined behavior. Some must come to Khorvaire to serve the needs of the Inspired, conducting trade and doing what needs to be done, but this is a dreaded fate. So why would a Riedran join a party of barbarians and live the unpredictable life of an adventurer? Consider the following ideas.

**The Rebellious Exile.** The Inspired have woven a masterful weapon of propaganda and manipulation. But there will always be those who discover secrets they weren't meant to know, a few who believe the kalashtar, or who otherwise come to despise the lords of Dal Quor. Are you a psion? Perhaps you were recruited to serve as a human agent of the Dreaming Dark, but turned against your new masters once you discovered their true nature. You can never convince your countrymen, and if you try, they will assume that you are possessed by a fiend and are trying to seduce them away from the path of righteousness. But if you were wrong about the Inspired, perhaps you're wrong about the people of Khorvaire. Perhaps nobility is hidden within them. And perhaps you can find allies in your fight -- a battle that will continue until your death.

**The Spy.** With the permission of your Dungeon Master, you could be a sleeper agent for the Dreaming Dark. You are human, but you have a patron -- a quori spirit who visits you in your dreams and gives you instructions. The Dreaming Dark is interested in the player characters; it has seen their potential. For now, you are simply to cement your bond with them and to build your skills. As time passes, you receive instructions -- some clear, some cryptic. Perhaps you can steer your group to serve the greater goals of the Dreaming Dark.

This option should be used with great care; if you are ordered to fight your companions, you might be forced to leave the group. Discuss things with your DM and make sure that you have the same vision of your future. One possibility is that you will learn more about the Dreaming Dark as you adventure -- and that you will become a rebel in time. The second possibility is that you will never be ordered to do anything that directly conflicts with the goals of the group. Depending on the plans of the DM, the Dreaming Dark could intend to wait for centuries before moving against Khorvaire: In the meantime, it has no love for the Lords of Dust, the Order of the Emerald Claw, the Cults of the Dragon Below, or any of the other forces that threaten the world. Thus, it could be that the enemy of an enemy can serve as a friend.

**The Evangelist.** Riedra is helping Khorvaire recover from the war. In addition to providing material aid (for a reasonable price), they have sent a number of agents of goodwill. In contrast to many of your countrymen, you are outgoing and willing to talk to strangers. You pity the people of Khorvaire, who lack the guidance of the Inspired. Search for ways to help the people around you. Inspire them with your actions. Help them defeat criminals and establish order -- all the while explaining how such problems would never arise in Riedra. Perhaps, with guidance and discipline, some of your companions will be reborn as Riedrans!

Whatever your path, when playing a Riedran keep the following things in mind.

- **Khorvaire Is a Land of Savages.** War. Organized crime. Fire-worshiping churches. Greedy dragonmarked houses, thirsty for gold. Whether you revere the Inspired or have turned against them, you'll still consider Khorvaire to be a land of chaos and misery.
- **Nonhumans?** Riedra is largely populated by humans. If you're from Riedra, you'll naturally view nonhumans as strange and untrustworthy -- especially shifty creatures like changelings or magical things like the warforged. Worst of all are the kalashtar. As a Riedran, you know that the kalashtar want to destroy the Inspired. The kalashtar are dangerous and deceptive creatures touched by demons. Don't trust anything a kalashtar says, and oppose them when you can.
- **Magic Is Dangerous.** Psionic abilities come from within, channeling the power of will and imagination. But arcane and divine magic are the result of trafficking with fiends and demons. Even if the spellcaster doesn't know what she's doing, she is placing her soul in jeopardy by channeling these forces. You can remain in a party with a wizard or cleric, but be sure to express your concern and to warn her to be cautious in the use of her powers.
- **The Inspired Are the Repositories of Wisdom.** Other people know nothing about the Inspired. Unless you're a rebel, you will not even listen to any attempt to malign your leaders. Your faith is absolute. The Inspired are guided by the brightest souls of the past. They brought your nation out of war and revealed the path to peace. They have made your world a paradise. The people of Khorvaire traffic with fiends on a regular basis; any such claims concerning your leaders are clearly deceptions.
- **Follow the Path of Discipline and Virtue.** In Riedra, all forms of vice are strictly discouraged. Such things are certain to harm your spiritual evolution, and what fool would sacrifice eternity for a few hours of physical pleasure or the empty pursuit of wealth? The greatest virtues in life are to assist others, to serve the Inspired, and to fulfill your role in society. Needless to say, if you're a spy for the Dreaming Dark, you'll have been taught to deceive (and likely be quite good at it). But the typical Riedran is honest and hard-working, placing duty and the needs of friends ahead of personal comfort.

Native Riedrans speak Riedran instead of Common; however, most Riedrans who come to Khorvaire learn the Common tongue, either as a bonus language or by spending skill points.

## So What's So Bad?

Reading this article, you might be left with the impression that Riedra is a utopia. The people are honest, content, and hard-working. War and crime are virtually unknown. So why don't we want the Inspired to take over Khorvaire?

The Riedrans don't believe that they are slaves or subjects of a tyranny, but that doesn't make it untrue. They live in a cage with bars made of tradition and propaganda, reinforced by psionic manipulation and a religion designed to serve the needs of the Inspired. There's no crime, because most people can't even conceive of committing a crime -- and those who can quickly vanish, though any Riedran will see this as being for the good of the nation. There's little room for advancement or change: You expect to earn change in your next life through your hard service in this one. The words of the Inspired are not to be questioned by those below them, and you take comfort in having this divine guidance. A world under the Inspired would be stable and peaceful, and the people might even be happy -- but they wouldn't be free.

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## About the Author

**Keith Baker** has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War*, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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